

THE NEXT CENTURY

Delaware's libraries have undergone dramatic changes over the last century and continue to evolve to meet the needs of Delawareans. The new State Standard for distributing funds to public libraries, called BASE, was specifically created to assist public libraries in building community support for library services. Key outcomes for BASE include:

- the establishment of a new cadre of community supporters;
- local city/town council awareness of the direction the libraries intend to take in the coming years;
- the opportunity for libraries to clearly articulate their goals and needs in requesting new or additional financial support; and
- excitement about new possibilities for library programs and services for the community.

Just as Florence Kane had a vision in 1901 of each community embracing its own library, Delaware libraries have come full circle to community based planning. This type of planning helps communities focus on their individual needs thus enabling them to become an ever more vital resource to their users.

There are a number of noteworthy forces that have provided leadership for Delaware libraries over the last century. Included among these are the Council On Libraries and its members, the Delaware Library Association and its many energetic individuals, many public officials, and numerous legislators. Currently, a new Task Force on Library Funding, sponsored by State Representative Joseph DiPinto and State Senator Nancy Cook, is exploring options and will make recommendations to the legislature on mechanisms to fund and improve Delaware's libraries, as they continually strive to fulfill the professional library vision of service for all Delawareans. That professional vision is to:

- serve the information needs of the communities;
- enhance literacy skills;
- support student academic achievement;
- bridge the digital divide; and
- enable life-long and informed learners who are full participants in strengthening their communities.

As we bridge to the new century, we hope that this publication will serve as a reminder to Delawareans of the rich history and importance public libraries had in our communities and how they continue to touch all of our lives. Join us as we explore our rich history and position ourselves for a journey into the future, where libraries will increasingly become our passport to the world. In an age that is information rich, your Delaware library card, now capable of being used remotely or in person, is indeed your bridge to knowledge.